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# **FOX FOOTPRINTS**

**NEW BORZOI POETRY**  
**SPRING 1923**

**POEMS** by *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

**FINDERS** by *John V. A. Weaver*

**GOLDEN BIRD** by *James Oppenheim*

**APRIL TWILIGHTS** by *Willa Cather*

**FOX FOOTPRINTS** by *Elizabeth J. Coatsworth*

# FOX FOOTPRINTS

ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH



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*To*  
I. R. C. *and* M. R. C. S.  
*in memory of our year in Asia*





For permission to reprint certain of the poems in this volume thanks are due *Contemporary Verse, The Century, The Dial, Harper's Magazine, The Liberator, The New East (Tokyo), Poetry (Chicago), Youth, and Asia*, in whose pages many of them first appeared.



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Enough of intersecting city streets

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<b>I have seen lovely sights in far-off places</b>	



**FOX FOOTPRINTS**





Enough of intersecting city streets  
And blank bare houses like a cabbage row—  
Right now along white beaches that I know  
The colored sea antiphonally beats,  
And Chinese gods from their old golden seats  
Look down on kneeling worshippers below,  
Fuji's great brows are filleted with snow,  
And in deep harbors flock the fishing fleets.

Am I bewitched? for in some way it seems  
That memories are more real than present times.  
I wander down the crowded streets of dreams  
And listen to long-silenced temple chimes,  
And Time and Distance which oppressed my heart  
Seem now but curtains I may draw apart.



THE  
MOON  
OVER  
JAPAN

**MOON OVER JAPAN**

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## MOON OVER JAPAN

MOON over Japan

White butterfly moon . . . .

The waters wash against the sacred islands

Where steps lead down to the sea,

Where neither death nor birth is permitted,

Where the heavy-lidded Buddhas dream

To the sound of the cuckoos' call.

The whitened mists lie adrift among the pine trees

And steal the color from the bright-leaved maples

On the mountains where the deer pasture and the monkeys

sleep among the branches;

And in the villages

The houses are powdered with mother-of-pearl

And the white wings of moon butterflies

Flicker down the streets

Brushing into darkness the useless round lanterns in the

hands of girls.

[3]

DAIBUTSU

In the spring  
As a blossom  
Wind carried  
From the peach tree  
I strike  
Buddha's cheek.  
Slowly eddying  
To the hollow  
Of his hand  
I lie spent.

[4]

**NIKKO**

**Is it because of the stitches of the rain  
That the hills and all the trees  
Seem embroidered upon cloth?**

**[5]**

## FUJI

LIKE an empress shielding her face with her sleeve,  
Fuji stands, cloud-hid, her trailing robes  
Wide spread about her:  
To the left and right  
The courtier mountains bow low at her feet.

[6]



## LACQUER

**THE persimmons hang  
Like elfin lanterns  
Thousands on thousands  
On the twisting boughs.  
Bright are they in the sunset  
Taunting the weary autumn moon.**

[7]

## **SAILS**

**THE river with its sails is a strip of blue silk  
On which moths have lighted  
And cling, tilting.**

**[8]**

## AT THE BRIDGE-OF-HEAVEN

SLANTWISE along the shore  
The low waves break—  
Sharp is the sound  
Like a quickly opened fan.

[9]

## CODE

**SHE was a samurai woman.**

**When she walked in his garden she looked like an iris in  
the midst of leaves, a banner among swords.**

**Her voice singing to the koto was like the wind in a bam-  
boo grove.**

**Their love was the love of phoenixes.**

**When he girded on his two swords dedicated to a hopeless  
cause**

**She went alone to pray before the tablets of the ancestors—  
Her dead face that speeded him to death was as serene as  
the face of the goddess Kwannon.**

**She was a samurai woman.**

[10]

## TEARS IN THE NIGHT

*Utamaro*

It is dusk.

Her lover is raising the great paper umbrella  
Against the coming rain.

Her mouth is like a scarlet maple leaf

On snow.

Her hair is a cascade of black silk.

Why then should she weep with her face turned away?

[11]

**COURTESAN ARRANGING HER COIFFURE**

*Kwaigetsudo*

HER face is a moon

Above swirls of clouds.

Her arms are lifted over her head.

She is crowning herself with the black lacquer of her hair.

[12]

MAY

*Adapted from the Japanese*

IN the morning I heard the song of a frog turned silent  
By a petal dropped on his mouth from the cherry trees.

At noon there was sun and stillness and cloudless sky  
And the breath from the butterflies' wings was the only  
breeze.

At sunset the crows sat sombrely cawing aloud  
Watching the sun go in scarlet flame from their sight,

And the ghosts of foxes played lightly under the moon  
Where my narcissus beds shone like frost in the night.

[13]

## AT DUSK A FOX

AT dusk a fox had run across his path  
And disappeared with smiling wicked eyes,  
It was so dark he scarce could feel his way  
Though all the fields were filled with fire-flies,  
And every tree it seemed was murmuring  
Among its leaves the words of an old song:  
“At fifteen even a devil’s a thistle-bloom”—  
The rustling followed as he went along.

Then in the darkness something brushed his sleeve,  
Faint hands reached out to touch him in the gloom,  
Her words were like the bright quick fire-flies—  
“At fifteen even a devil’s a thistle-bloom!”



## LEGEND

It is not the wind in the young leaves,  
It is not the stream whispering in the darkness,  
But the mats are stirred by dancing feet  
And the air moves with the lisp of brocade.  
The lanterns are lit in the lonely room  
And the incense is fragrant on the shelf of the Buddha.  
Outside the blue snow covers the mountains  
And the hydrangea bushes rap against the shoji like weary  
ghosts—

But within there is only a girl dancing before the tablet of  
her lover  
That his spirit may still take its pleasure in her beauty.

## THE INVIOABLE

SUNLIGHT and shadow on the polished floor  
Thrown by the bamboo curtains at the door.  
Quiet brown dusk elsewhere folding close  
The faint gold pillars, lacquered offering-stands,  
The lotuses and incense, and above,  
Amida Buddha with symbolic hands.  
His head is weary with its orbèd thought  
Beginningless and endless as the tide.  
Woman, pray not upon the polished floor—  
What can it mean to him a child has died?  
Gladness and sorrow are but light and shade  
The bamboo curtains at his door have made.

## GARDEN GOD

Lo, I have brought  
An ear of rice  
And a spray of berries  
To place before the god  
At our rice field's corner.

[17]

## A CHILD

**SHE stands**  
**Her brilliant robes**  
**Caught round her waist—**  
**A hollyhock,**  
**Brown legs for stamens.**

[18]

## **SAMURAI WOMAN**

**I AM but a mirror  
Having no virtue in myself,  
But it is my pride that he whom I reflect is distinguished.**

**[19]**

## BEWITCHED

HE is fox-bewitched! he is fox-bewitched!  
Running and stumbling among the trees!  
A band of blood flows across the sky  
The brambles catch at his weakening knees!  
There in the hollow the fire-flies swarm,  
Fires of torment to burn and sear!  
Padding unheard on his crashing flight  
Ten thousand foxes follow near!

Here is his home he thinks, hope grows  
As he flees to the doors that show so dark—  
But the whispering woods draw near to see  
Him tear his hands on an old tree's bark  
And the pool of blood across the sky  
Dies out to a night owl's choking cry.

[20]

## MID-WINTER

THE sky is white,  
The earth is white,  
There is snow on the head of the wayside Jizo  
And icicles hang from his chin and his cold stone hands.  
All day the out-cast crows croak hoarsely across the  
whiteness  
Until with night their misshapen forms and voices are lost  
in the darkness.

[21]

## REMINISCENCE

It is a holiday, and shall be casually used  
As fits its dignity.  
I will wander among Japanese silks  
Piled here beside me on the window-seat,  
Stray squares of fancy  
Sold in the low close-packed Kyoto streets.  
Here are ultramarine rivers  
With long skeins of foam  
On which float boats laden with flowers;  
Here are symbols  
On gamboge—pine, bamboo, heron and tortoise  
Auguring an old age or a happy married life;  
And there a flock of fat-cheeked flying sparrows  
In browns and grays and dullest granite-blues  
Flood a whole square of mauve and violet—  
The soft silk almost flutters with their wings;  
And next come fancies to entice a child:  
The black hare of the moon, pounding elixir,  
The jewelled orange crow that nests in the sun,  
And then my favorite, three round parasol-tops

[22]



Jostling together while brocaded leaves  
Float down upon them—there is the whole scene—  
The pith of autumn! scarlet wizardry  
Soft-tapping on the dull brown parasols  
Which hide invisible bright faces. . . .  
Idly I turn the squares  
Each one the marrow of some delicate mood.

SCENES FROM THE MAKURA NO SHOSHI AND THE GENJI MONOGATARI.—Two of the Classics of Japan written by Ladies of the court in the early eleventh century.

*From the prose of W. G. Aston and Suyematz Kenchio*

FROM THE PILLOW SKETCHES

I

THROUGH the open door of the Mikado's apartments we could see the pictures of the sea-creatures, Some long-armed and some with long legs. We laughed about them as we set the great flower-pots of green porcelain by the balustrade of the verandah, Filling them with five-foot cherry-branches, whose blossoms over-flowed to the edge of the railing. The brother of the empress drew near, in a cherry-colored tunic, His trousers were purple and his undergarments patterned in deep crimson: He sat before the door and made report to the emperor. In front of the screen stood the waiting women.

[24]

Their jackets were sleeveless and the color of cherries,  
Some were dressed in wistaria and some in kerria.  
It was the serene noon-time.  
In my heart I wished that so it might continue for a  
thousand years.  
Alas.

## II

A delightful animal is the Cat-in-Waiting on the Mikado.  
She is a favorite with His Highness and has many titles:  
He has conferred upon her the fifth rank of nobility,  
And has ordered her called Miyobu-no-Otodo,  
Chief Superintendent of the Female Attendants of the  
Palace.  
For all that, she *will* go out on the bridge and sleep in  
full view in the sunlight,  
However loudly the attendant in charge of her may call:  
“Oh, improper! Come in at once!”

## FROM THE GENJI MONOGATARI

### *Court Ceremony*

So fair was he with the Chinese topknot  
Drawn boyishly from his forehead  
That the official who was to rearrange his hair  
Trembled and hesitated,  
While the Emperor, his father, remembering the lady who  
    had died broken-hearted,  
Thought "Ah, if she could but have seen him at this  
    moment!"

When he had been crowned he arrayed himself in the full  
    robes of manhood,  
And danced before the court a measured step to express  
    his gratitude,  
While trays of fruit and delicacies were distributed by  
    imperial order.

[26]

*The Forgotten Lover*

THE night was cold, and so dreary that my thoughts turned  
towards the lady with whom I had quarrelled.

Hesitating, I went to her house, shaking the snow from my  
shoulders.

The curtains had not been drawn and there was a dim  
lamp burning.

Traced on the window I could see the maids warming a  
quilt by the fire—

But she, whom I loved, was not there,

And I was left standing deep in the snow.

## JAPAN

**LITTLE lacquer cups in boxes of light wood exquisitely made:**

**The swords of the samurai, with guards inlaid in patterns of silver and gold, which, once drawn, must be sheathed with honor or in the bodies of their bearers:**

**The children at evening, in their bright dresses, playing about the streets:**

**The stupid, lumpish faces of the women in the fishing villages:**

**The grotesque yet overwhelming dignity of the Nō dancers, masked and brilliant, declaiming before the painted pine of the background:**

**The tracks of ghost foxes through the woods where the boys hunt for mushrooms in the autumn:**

**The restraint of the tea ceremony:**

**The long swirl of the robes of the beauties of the Green Houses:**

**The farm girls with their kimono-skirts caught in their belts, planting young rice shoots knee-deep in the ooze of the terraces, thinking curiously, as they see their**

**[28]**

faces reflected in the brown water, of the white  
powdered skins of the city girls:  
The consumptive look of the clerks kneeling on clean mats  
like ascetics in contemplation:  
Compactness.

[29]





**MOON OVER CHINA**



## MOON OVER CHINA

MOON over China,

Weary moon on the river of the sky . . . .

The stir of light in the willows is like the flashing of a  
thousand minnows

Through dark shoals.

The tiles on the graves and rotting temples shine like  
ripples,

The sands of deserts, and the great shoulders of treeless  
mountains whiten austerely in its rays.

The sky is flecked with clouds like the scales of a dragon,  
And the beggars lying beneath the city walls huddled to-  
gether, whine

“It will rain on us before another nightfall.”

## EARLY DUSK

THE moon is as frail as a disk of cobwebs,  
The willows are scarcely green among the meadows  
Where a thousand paper pennons wave above the crops  
And the black oxen walk slowly homeward beside the still  
canals.

In the distant sky a kite is tugging at its string,  
The rooks caw among their nests in the treetops,  
Above the doors set deep in russet walls  
Droop broken branches of faint green willow,  
And the men and girls come from their work in the fields  
Carrying sprays of flowering almond in their hands.

## **SPRING**

**THE earth's coat is the green of young willows  
Beside brown streams.**

**It is embroidered over with flowering trees—  
Plum, peach and apricot.**

**Her sleeves are delicately scented.**

**Her hair is unbound in the wind.**

**Even the moon is so enamoured**

**That before dusk he climbs the stairs of heaven to be-  
hold her.**

## PRAYER

THE little gate opens from the dragon garden  
Into the smoky darkness of the temple  
Lit by the red wax tapers' swaying flames.  
The air is heavy with the incense  
Burned before the painted images of the gods.  
In the bronze brazier I too shall burn my offering—  
Silver paper for the spirits of the falling peach blossoms.

[36]

## FROM THE PAVILION

ALL month from the pavilion I look forth  
Across the pool to where the willow tree  
Flings long green pennons to the water's rim.  
The small peach bears a load all blossomy  
But presently she lets it downward fall  
Petal by petal from her listless hands  
Intent on listening to the beating wings  
Of swift spring days flying from southern lands.  
Beneath the crested eaves the wind-bells praise  
Hawk days, dove days, and darting swallow days.

[37]

## LONELINESS

The candle gave good augury last night.  
All day I've waited by the garden gate,  
My arms about the child, and now it's late  
And still he has not ridden into sight.  
No fate is good for me save his return,  
The babe is a plum-garland for his heart,  
It cannot be the Gods will us to part—  
To-night again the candle I must burn.

O empty street, I do not think you lead  
To the dear lord for whom my poor heart grieves.  
The sky has walled you up like an old tomb  
And in the dark there's dew upon my sleeves.



## TRIBUTE

THE shadows of the camels are long  
On the parched ground.

The weary shuffling feet  
Make no sound.

Through clouds of yellow dust  
The city lies

Turned golden to the weary  
Riders' eyes.

They shall find welcome there  
From princely men

For the sake of their frosted vase  
Of porcelain.

## DESERTED

INTO the ancient courtyard only come  
The winds to scatter swirls of blossom petals  
About the bronzen phoenix, and great daws  
To build untidy nests in evergreens.  
A swaggering magpie perches on the eaves  
Among the broken orange-tinted tiles.  
The gates are bolted—these alone come near,  
Unless one counts the antiquarian moss  
Creeping to treasure the last faint imprint  
Of royal feet upon the worn flag-stones.

## BY THE CANAL

At the wall-corner where the tiled roof throws  
A sweeping, swallow line against the sky  
The peach-tree stands, outlined in faded rose,  
The rooks backward and forward fly,  
Two hens take shelter where the mulberry grows,  
The rain scuds by.

## GHOULS

ALL day the long cold fingers of the rain  
Have pried at the gray tiles above the graves  
Finishing the work of years in the drear fields,  
Where coffins lie uncovered in the light  
Of sulfurous mustard blooms. Here by the bank  
The greedy water has uncovered bones  
Shining, blue-white, wet in the biting wind.

## MARSH CHASE

THE light of the hid moon streaks all the sky  
With ominous panther bars,  
The marshes lie  
In taut and quivering silence,  
The lagoons  
Lip through their grasses searching for lost moons.  
Like evil berries the green fire-flies light  
On the long rushes,  
Through the dim-lit night  
A round red lantern flees,  
Jerking and blind,  
From the red lantern following close behind.

## RELEASE

THE dust is thick along the road,  
The fields are scorching in the sun,  
My wife has many a bitter word  
To greet me when the day is done.

The neighbors rest beside the gate  
But half their words are high and shrill,  
My little son is young to help,  
The fields are very hard to till.

But in the dusk I raise my eyes  
And the poet's words come back to me  
"In the moon there is a white jade gate  
Shadowed cool by a cassia tree."

## THE MOUNTAINS

It is evening.

The mountains sit, impenetrable as Buddhas,

The light falls upon their foreheads

Leaving their quiet forms and vast robes in darkness.

The sky hangs drooping above their heads

Like a canopy;

The immense earth is awed beneath their feet.

Only the lowing of the cows and the calls of the herdboys  
in the meadows

Come faintly to their ears.

[45]

## THE GREAT WALL

**MOUNTAINS,  
Green faded to gold,  
Turf-shaggy like a camel,  
Towering,  
Tumultuous,  
Uncompromising as the ten commandments,  
Glorious as a psalm,  
Gale-swept, cloud-swept, sand-swept, snow-swept—**

**Across these the Wall's crested sinuousness  
Daring all chasms,  
Leaping all precipices,  
Writhing its stone length  
Across each challenge of tormented rock  
To raise again a blunt watch-tower head  
Down-glaring on Mongolia's fierce plains.**

[46]



## EXILE

THE sun is only the sun here  
But every day when he goes to China  
He is a celestial dragon breathing gold and scarlet.  
And the moon here is only a moon  
But over the pagodas she is a white phoenix,  
And there the stars are little silver unicorns with crystal  
crowns.

The iris are not like our iris, nor the chrysanthemums like  
our chrysanthemums  
For at dusk they hide bewitching carmine mouths behind  
little fans  
And the garden is filled with the sound of their hurrying  
slippers.  
The willow trees too cover white faces with their long  
sleeves  
And the fox bride is pledged in cups of jade.

And we,  
We are only lovers here  
But who knows what we might be—  
In China?

[47]



**IRIS FROM CHINESE BULBS**



## AUTUMN

OVER the golden well  
Yellow are the elm trees,  
Autumn is on the land  
There is no breeze.

Forgetful of the dawn  
And buzzing noon,  
The russet cocks  
Crow to the moon.

## PEONY

AT morning she is flushed with wine,  
And in the evening she dyes her dress.  
Rich is the fragrance of her sleeves,  
Imperial is her loveliness.

She decks her ears with pearls at dawn,  
She laughs at the green willow's grief,  
And when her time has come, she falls  
Filled with a radiant disbelief.

## FOX GRAVE

“AH, hell is wide and thy feet are small,  
There is never an inn to shelter thee”—  
So wept the poet, bowing his head  
Over the grave where her bones should be,  
And never saw that his fox-girl love  
Was laughing at him through a flowering tree.

## **FLATTERY**

**If you would win the love of Spring  
Then talk to her of trees,  
If Summer's favor you would have  
Be bold to mention these—  
Her gardens in their golden prime  
Sung to by courtier bees.**

**[54]**



## THE LOVER

IN sable and cicada gauze  
He sought the Flower-and-Vapor House.  
They filled with wine the white jade cups  
And crowned him for carouse.  
But though he held Nim No's gay sleeve  
The eyes were blank she turned to him  
For she was listening to a song  
Down by the river's brim.

## THE TOMB OF FLOWERS

WHEN the courtesan Chong Khin died  
Her grave was on Jasmine Hill,  
Each lover planted a flower  
And the flowers bloom there still—

But where is Chong Khin the lovely  
And the lovers who bowed to her will?

## **FESTIVAL**

**MAPLE** oars lash the sea, red with the setting sun,  
The sea-gulls cry aloud like women above the slain,  
I sit in the festival boat beneath the awnings of silk,  
But there is no joy in my heart.  
Shall I never see him again?

[57]

## LOVE TOWER

PRINCE SUNG built Tsheng-leng tower  
From which he might espy  
Dame Sik of the smoke-like hair  
And willow-waist go by.

When the moon looks full at the sun  
In the month that the asters flower  
Prince Sung bade bring Dame Sik  
Into the gay tiled tower.

“Give thy handmaid leave to bathe,  
And change her unworthy dress,  
She will serve thee with napkin and comb  
As befits thy worshipfulness.”

She bathed and changed her robes  
In a long slow Autumn hour.  
Then smiled in the face of Prince Sung  
And leapt from the top of the tower.

[58]

## THE WAVES

*Suggested by the Korean*

THE waves break on the shore:

Dragons white-scaled breathing a flying mist

Rasping the pebbles with white slipping talons,

Gray cliffs cloud-circled falling in thundering ruin,

Low-driven sleet and snow crashing across the frozen  
marshes of the void—

The waves break on the shore.

[59]

## CHINA

**DUST and ruined beauty:**

**The free walk of the men in their dark blue clothes:**

**The shrewd humorous faces of the women:**

**Loud voices and everywhere the latent mob:**

**Temples created as by magic, with the imperial gold tiles  
falling from the roofs like leaves from an Autumn elm:**

**Ridiculous whimsicality of embroideries:**

**Confucius, Laotze, and Buddha with wagging sleeves, in a  
dance before the applauding old men of heaven:**

**That greatest of all dragons, the Great Wall, coiling over  
whole ranges, the work and tomb of millions:**

**Age, decrepitude, non-individualism, bursting like a scar-  
let fire-cracker into a shower of lyrics.**

[60]

**MOON OVER THE TROPICS**





## MOON OVER THE TROPICS

MOON over the tropics,  
A white curved bud  
Opening its petals slowly in the warmth of heaven . . .  
The white tree-lilies droop in its presence,  
The long-stemmed cocoanut palms catch little reflections  
And gather them on their leaves like garlands of shiny  
flowers.

The air is full of odors  
And langorous warm sounds.  
In the flooded terraces the bright outline of the moon  
Is a silver floor for the young rice to stand upon,  
And a flute drones its insect music to the night  
Below the curving moon-petal of the sky.

[63]

## THE SOUTH SEAS ISLANDS

OUT from the sea the islands emerge  
Like sharp buds with petals close-folded.  
The coral reefs lie about them, rimming lily pads of round  
still water,  
And the sun shines, and the trade winds blow, and the con-  
tinents lie out of memory beyond the horizon.  
The trees are thick and heavy with fruit and flowers,  
The blue seas are filled with fish and monsters like night-  
mares,  
From high up in the hills comes the cool sound of falling  
water,  
And the people are of a race grown tall and shapely  
With the taste of human blood, offered in the darkness of  
the gods.

[64]

## LES SEINS AUX FLEURS ROUGES

*Gauguin*

### *Island Women*

THEY are the daughters of the morning of the world  
Hidden for centuries behind the walls of the sea.  
They are part of the jungle as fruits are or flowers  
And their breasts are like blossoms.  
Their forms are luminous as though they had stored up the  
sunshine  
And all their motions are large and tranquil.

[65]

## APPARITION

**THE moon at the water's edge  
Is a woman dancing on silver swords.**

[66]

## THE COOLIE SHIP

ACROSS the huddled forms, each wrapped in its blanket,  
Lying in the dim light drifted with the smoke of opium  
pipes,

Fetid with close-packed life,

Sound the broken notes of a crude and primitive flute.

The waves strike the ship which rocks and tosses,

The weary figures are torpid, each beside its bundle,

The stars swing and sway as though weighted to strings,

The tired engines gasp and strain against the sea—

They beat quick and uneven like the heart of a dying man.

Yet across the troubled ship, losing itself in the hugeness of  
sky and sea

The Chinese flute breathes its broken song into the night.

## UNDER THE SANDALWOOD TREE

*From a catalogue of Vedic Paintings*

**IN the early morning  
Under the sandalwood tree  
Sits the woman, in her robe of an ascetic,  
Under the sandalwood tree  
Playing the instrument, Poöngi,  
Calling the peacocks and snakes,  
The peacocks that stand about her in a circle,  
With spread tails, a wall of bronze,  
A wall of jewelled bronze, ohé!  
And the snakes that sway their throats,  
Their rippling throats, mailed and slender,  
To the sound of the instrument, Poöngi,  
In the thin hands of the holy woman  
Under the sandalwood tree  
In the morning,  
The early hours of the morning.**

[68]

## THE SACRED PASTORAL OF BRINDABAN

From a series of Rajput paintings giving incidents in the village life of Krishna, the Divine Herdsman, and Rādhā, his beloved among the herd-girls, in the mystic drama of God and the Soul.

### COW-DUST

IN the first dusk Krishna, the Divine Herdsman, drives the cows through the village gates:

Like a river they flow, white and dun and spotted, with strings of bells about their throats and their large-eyed calves at their sides;

The hands of the herd-boys are on their sleek flanks, they are singing as they follow.

The girls carrying pitchers of water turn to look, and from the windows in white walls

Veiled women lean down, smilingly stretching out henna-tipped fingers

Towards Krishna who walks slowly, blue as the evening smoke,

Drawing all souls after him with the music of his flute.

[69]

### SECRET MEETING

THE cow stands quietly to be milked, turning her kind head  
over her shoulder:

The rest of the herd has passed into the barns:

It is evening.

At the door of her house stands Rādhā, gently holding the  
calf

And guessing perhaps that the woman's veil of the milker  
Covers the face of her lover.

In a minute, in a minute, he will rise

And come towards her:

The dusk will be full of the sweetness of new milk,

And the sound of the cow breathing as she leans to her calf.

Then he will take her into his arms

And her heart at last will be as quiet as the evening it-  
self.

### JEALOUSY

THE wood is filled with long streamers of flowers,

And birds that sing among the branches.

In a glade Krishna is standing towering above the milkmaids  
that surround him.

They sway, smiling, from the circle of his arms,

Their draperies swirl along the grass—

Only Rādhā, whom he does not see, stands straight among  
the bright-eyed flowers,

Like a cypress in her grief.

[70]



## **LONGING**

**THE** storm is rising and the clouds call to one another in  
terrible voices,  
The air is heavy with coming rain, the lightning runs  
across the sky  
And the soul is nearly fainting with longing for love.  
On the roof the peacock is dancing, singing shrill songs in  
honor of the tempest,  
While Rādhā reaches up to it a bowl of meal,  
An offering to quiet her heart torn by the absence of her  
lover.

## **CONTENT**

**RĀDHĀ**, the beloved, kneels before her cooking, smiling and  
concentrated,  
She has thrown back her long robe from her shoulders,  
showing the blossoms of her breast,  
Her feet on the carpet are tipped with red like lotuses,  
Behind her the maid bends over the baskets of vegetables  
And from a balcony window the face of Krishna looks down,  
And smiles, for the iris-throated pigeons are cooing upon  
the roofs  
And Rādhā, among her pots, is lovely with the thought of  
love.

[71]

## ADVENTURE

I SHALL buy me a sampan shaped like a slipper  
With eyes on either side of the prow,  
And hoist a sail all ruddy-golden  
For the Spice Isles now.

There will be nine Chinamen upon her  
With naked backs, like the sail red-gold,  
And silks and ivory and jade and amber  
Will fill the hold.

I shall sail forever between green islands  
While under her poop the wake will grow—  
A ripple across the copper waters  
In the tropic glow.

## JAVA

EVERYWHERE the fresh green of rice in the terraces, with  
the herons perched on the mud walls,  
And the roads like tree-bordered bridges between the fields;  
The huge ruins of the Hindu faiths, where meek Buddhas sit  
throned on broken lotuses:  
The neighing of little stallions in silver-trimmed harness:  
The straight backs and beautiful breasts of the smiling  
brown women:  
The long hours after *rice table* spent reading behind the  
mosquito nets while the lizards watch from the ceiling:  
Wild hill-nasturtiums thickly carpeting a pine wood:  
The swaying of one's chair while the eight-man squads of  
bearers are racing one another down a narrow trail:  
The tentacled cone of the Bromo rising out of the expanse  
of the Sand Sea:  
Orchids and tree-toads.

[73]

## IN SIAMESE WATERS

**THERE** is an island like a sickle moon  
That lies deserted in a tropic sea,  
Half-finished terraces of masonry  
Lead up to heights that know the cool monsoon,  
Sweet odors hold the silence in a swoon,  
For everywhere the frangipanni tree,  
Twisted and leafless, but all blossomy,  
Traces its scented shadow in the noon.

Paths lead to shaded grottoes and small coves  
Meant for a royal lady's bathing-place,  
But no one moves among the warm strange groves,  
The shining sea reflects no leaning face,  
There are not even ghosts, or so it seems,  
To wake the spot from its enchanted dreams.

## THE OXEN

THE yoke of great white oxen bow their heads  
Beneath the weight of their up-curving horns  
Brass-tipped and painted a dull apricot.  
On each flank two faint bluish sweeping lines  
Mark the old branding,  
Heavy are their humps,  
Swaying the thin white dewlap from their throats.  
Ten silver bells are bound from horn to horn.  
The driver stands, one leg behind the other,  
Wrapped in white cloth from thin loins to thin knee,  
His awkwardness a grace conventionalized.  
Up to the oxen's bellies all is green  
But their low-swinging heads and sword-like horns  
And all the angles of the man are placed  
Against a brilliant blue.

So might they stand  
Frescoed upon the walls of some old tomb,  
To fill with pride the dusted hearts of mummies  
Still masters over so much tranquil power.

[75]

## CHANG WAT

THE wat towers rise in slim phantasy against the evening,  
Pied with flowers of porcelain are they like an English  
meadow

Or the border of some monkish chronicle.  
The ragged ravens light on their galleries,  
And circle, cawing, in flocks about the gardens,  
Below the river lies, a gleam with sunset.

Buddha! Master! all things serve thee.  
See how the peaceful heavens wrap themselves  
In the yellow cloak of thy ministry, bending low  
To cast its folds across the river's bosom.  
After the heat of the day comes the quiet of thy teaching,  
When the fierce heart of the sky softens to meditation.  
After the bitterness of youth, and the foulness of desire,  
Comes wisdom to the hearts of thy children, thy servants  
of the Yellow Robe.

[76]

## BALI

IN a yellow sea lies Bali, sinister and mystic.  
From the throats of her volcanoes the steam rises in thick  
clouds  
Spreading desolation and hiding the ancient gods.  
The jungle lies about the villages like heavy green water  
Lapping the shoals of the terraces,  
But the temples  
Roof above roof  
Thrust their way up into the open air.  
Their gateways are carved with the figures of uncouth and  
grinning deities  
Pinnacles of terror.  
Old gods of stone lie on the hillsides, their open mouths  
outlined against the sky,  
Listening to the narrow water falling beside them  
Where the women fill their jars in the lush coolness of  
evening.  
In the rice terraces one might dream that the sky lay  
shattered,  
With the young shoots for stars.

[77]

The pink flamingoes stand on the banks  
And the palm trees grow above them  
Like visions,  
Like minarets,  
Thin and swaying as dancing girls in elaborate headdresses.

Wave on wave in fluid brilliance  
The copper sea breaks against the cliffs.  
Wave on wave it strikes the drums of the rocks  
And sends the sound throbbing along the sky.

[78]



I have seen lovely sights in far-off places  
Whose very names with sandalwood are sweet,  
And lure the tongue until it must repeat:  
Canton, and Bangkok on its marshy spaces,  
Kyoto filled with children's flower-like faces,  
And all the marvel of a Peking street,  
And burning Kilauea at one's feet,  
And Singapore, the meeting-place of races.

So having seen, I say: Beauty is one  
And needs no journeying nor far emprise,  
Across all things its gracious tendrils run  
And flower unnoticed by our casual eyes—  
The apple tree that blossoms in the sun  
Is not surpassed by all of Paradise!

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